

From:
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Mother Nature has decided to kick off the 2012-2013 winter season with a whopper of a storm. Hurricane Sandy is forecast to make landfall early in the upcoming week, and it will begin to affect Western New York on Monday October 29. As with any storm, weather predictions and forecasts are changing constantly, so what we are hearing from government officials and forecast centers right now is subject to change and update. It is clear, however that this storm will have a major impact on the Eastern part of the United States and on Western New York and the Akron/Newstead Community. Our community has always been resilient in the ability of our residents and local officials to handle whatever nature brings us, and we expect that this upcoming event will be no different. The key to being prepared is being educated, so we strongly advise that our residents stay tuned to their favorite news source/website and to stay abreast of weather developments.

Currently, we can expect to receive heavy rains throughout the early part of the upcoming week. These rains will be on top of soil that has been saturated already by the rains we received over this past weekend. Flooding is expected in area creeks, streams, and poor drainage areas. If you live in an area that is subject to flooding (similar to what we see in the early spring snow melt) then you can expect high water levels throughout most of the upcoming week.

In addition, forecasters are warning of high winds. These winds are currently forecast to begin Monday afternoon and continue through Tuesday. While we are no strangers to windstorms, this wind event is forecast to be a different than what we are used to. Winds from Storm Sandy are presently forecast to be out of the North/Northeast. Most prevailing winds in our area come out of the west/southwest, so most trees grow with root systems to defend against a westerly wind. Since Sandy's winds are forecast to be coming from a different direction, trees especially may be more vulnerable to wind damage than they normally are. So even though wind speeds may not be forecast to be at record levels, they will be coming from a unique direction, and the result MAY be high levels of tree damage and potential power outages in our community. So we should all be prepared for tree damage and power outages.

The key to dealing with a severe weather event is to stay informed of changing conditions and forecasts. So please monitor your favorite weather source, whether it be local news or radio. As a suggestion, the following websites are very useful in providing information on severe weather events:

www.nws.noaa.gov

www.nyalert.gov

www.erie.gov/disaster

www.ready.gov

These sites provide access to general tips to follow in the event of extended power outages. Here are a couple of suggestions:

- If you use a backup power generator, please be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions regarding proper ventilation. DO NOT run backup generators in an enclosed area/garage/indoors. Carbon Monoxide and exhaust kills; Generators must be used outdoors and in a well-ventilated area.

- Keep a supply of flashlights/batteries/backup lighting on hand; Candles are an extreme fire hazard, but if you must use candles, be sure to be VERY alert with their use; most home fires during power outages are caused by candles and open flames. Candles MUST be kept away from curtains and other combustible items. Be sure that pets, kids, etc. are kept away from any lit candles to ensure that they cannot be knocked over and start a fire.
- Monitoring: each residence should have at least one working smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector on every floor. During a power outage, you need to ensure that these detectors can function on battery power.
- Have a plan to be able to take care of yourself and your family during an emergency. Have a backup plan to stay with a friend/family member/etc. if you experience an extended power outage. Part of what makes our community special is the sense of community that we show to our neighbors. So, if your power goes out, please check on your neighbors to be sure they are OK as well.
- Have a battery-powered radio on hand to listen to weather updates and emergency information. A NOAA Weather radio is very useful, because it can alert you to many different types of emergencies. These radios are inexpensive and are available at most department stores and electronics retailers

Again, please be sure to monitor the news channels and the internet to stay up to date on changing weather forecast and weather conditions. Our local fire departments, local government and elected officials are prepared to deal with anything that Mother Nature sends our way. Utility companies, fire departments, and public works agencies have specific priority lists and procedures that they follow during emergency events to ensure that public safety is maintained. Please be patient as these agencies work through the situation.

We in Western New York are no strangers to severe weather. Hurricane Sandy will be a challenge for us all, and the week ahead will be a busy one. Please be safe.